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Enhanced cooperation and programme and policy coordination

Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination

Note by the Secretariat**

Summary

The United Nations Forum on Forests and its secretariat have pursued a range of cooperative and coordination functions to promote and implement the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and to achieve sustainable forest management at all levels. As a common item, addressed at each session, enhanced cooperation and coordination are viewed as a tool to foster closer collaboration between the Forum and other forest-related international organizations, institutions and instruments.

The present note provides an overview of progress made by the Forum and its secretariat in performing the function of enhanced coordination and cooperation on forests. It describes the activities undertaken, particularly since the Forum's fourth session, in building synergies with relevant United Nations bodies, international instruments and mechanisms, as well as intergovernmental and regional organizations and stakeholders. The note also describes some of the activities of the secretariat within the United Nations system, particularly within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. Underscoring future directions, this note puts forward some options to further enhance coordination and

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cooperation on forests. It is suggested, for consideration by the Forum, that greater collaboration and cooperation on sustainable forest management are needed across sectors, between the national focal points of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions and those of the Forum, between international and regional organizations and their secretariats, and within the United Nations system.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35, of 18 October 2000, decided that the international arrangement on forests would perform six principal functions to achieve its main objective. One of these principal functions was to enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as to contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors. At its first session, the United Nations Forum on Forests made provision in its multi-year programme of work for enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination to be addressed as a common item at each session of the Forum. The Forum also decided to undertake active efforts to develop synergies with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and the Commission on Sustainable Development and other functional commissions of the Council, as well as other relevant international and regional processes and organizations, institutions and instruments.

2. The present note focuses on the activities that have been undertaken since the fourth session of the Forum on enhanced cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination. Section I covers enhanced cooperation with, and between, Partnership members, enhanced cooperation with stakeholders, and country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum, and advances in forest partnerships and processes. Section II deals with policy and programme coordination with United Nations bodies, section III with regional involvement, and section IV with international instruments and organizations relevant to the forest sector. The note draws from national reports, country- and organization-led initiatives and the report of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests (E/CN.18/2005/2) held in New York in September 2004. It highlights the lessons learned and challenges encountered, as well as new opportunities in respect of this item for the years ahead. Points for discussion are also put forward for the consideration of the Forum on how to further enhance coordination and cooperation on forests. The report of the Secretary-General on the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (E/CN.18/2005/__) also presents information on cooperation and policy and programme coordination, based on responses from member States, Partnership members and other relevant organizations and forest-related processes, to the voluntary questionnaire to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session of the Forum, contained in the annex to Forum resolution 4/4 on the process to facilitate that review.

3. Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination have been central to the work of the Forum. At its first session, the Forum, in addition to adopting resolution 1/1 on its multi-year programme of work for 2001-2005, also adopted resolution 1/3 on the initiation of the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in support of the Forum. At its second session, the Forum, in resolution 2/1, adopted a Ministerial Declaration and a Message from the Forum to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. That Declaration, inter alia, underlined the unique character of the international arrangement on forests; stressed the need for the Forum to promote synergies with United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related conventions,[1] and encouraged effective cooperation

between the secretariats of the Forum and the Convention on Biological Diversity in areas of mutual interest. At its third session, the Forum adopted resolution 3/4 on enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, in which it stressed the need to further strengthen the Forum, with the support of the Partnership members, as the key intergovernmental mechanism for facilitating and coordinating implementation of sustainable forest management. To advance cooperation with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Forum, in the same resolution, welcomed the request of the Convention to work collaboratively on issues of common interest and requested the Coordinator and Head of the Forum secretariat to reflect the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests/United Nations Forum on Forests experiences on sustainable forest management at relevant meetings of the Convention. Also in resolution 3/4, the Forum invited the Global Environment Facility (GEF), within its mandate and respective operational programmes and strategies, to give due consideration to financing related forests projects. No specific resolution on enhanced cooperation was adopted at the fourth session, but member States reiterated the continuing importance of enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination.

I. Enhanced cooperation

A. Collaborative Partnership on Forests

4. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests has been instrumental in providing substantive support to the work of the Forum, and enhancing collaboration, cooperation and coordination; this has included joint forest-related initiatives among its members. In 2004, the Partnership convened two technical meetings of the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting and three Expert Meetings on Harmonizing Forest-related Definitions for Use by Various Stakeholders. The Partnership also launched a new initiative on a Global Forest Information Service (GFIS). The majority of Partnership members have participated actively in the sessions of the Forum, providing technical advice and contributing to panel discussions. In 2004, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also provided direct support to the Forum secretariat through the secondment of staff. As a voluntary partnership, the Partnership receives guidance from the Forum, but each member takes direction from, and is accountable to, its own governing body. In this regard, many of the governing bodies of the members of the Partnership are calling for greater cooperation with the Forum. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2005 (E/CN.18/2005/INF/1) provides an assessment of the progress of the Partnership since its inception in 2001, highlighting joint initiatives of Partnership members and describing other collaborative activities undertaken to promote sustainable forest management worldwide.

B. Stakeholder involvement

5. In order that stakeholder involvement may be enhanced, participation by major groups continues to be strengthened. Regular consultations with major group focal points were organized by the Secretariat throughout the year. Major groups prepared

substantive inputs to the meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests, and major group representatives presented their perspectives at a panel discussion during this meeting. The panel and the subsequent reporting were well received by experts, government representatives and major group members. The level of participation will also be enhanced during the fifth session. Major groups are providing discussion papers and the Bureau for the fifth session of the Forum has decided to integrate the multi-stakeholder dialogue into the plenary and working group meetings, as well as into the high-level segment of the session. There is also a growing spirit of collaboration and partnership among the different groups as major group organizations continue to seek ways of leveraging each other's strengths and constituencies.

C. Country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum

6. Country- and organization-led initiatives have been recognized as a fundamental part of the work of the Forum. Linked to different themes of the Forum's multi-year programme of work, these initiatives have provided a number of opportunities for experts to address the issues prior to Forum sessions. During the period 2001-2005, there will have been 17 such initiatives, 7 of which are taking place in preparation for the fifth session. The increased number of country- and organization-led initiatives attest to greater collaboration and partnership for sustainable forest management. It is noteworthy that during the past year three organization-led initiatives were organized by major groups. The initiatives exemplify the collaborative and constructive outlook of member States, and international and regional organizations, including Partnership members, as well as civil society representatives, in achieving sustainable forest management and advancing the work of the Forum. The diversification of workshops and expert meetings in various regions worldwide has also played a significant role in raising awareness of the work of the Forum, in promoting increased understanding of the issues and in facilitating discussions. The Forum secretariat has provided input and advice to all initiatives held in support of the Forum.

7. Recent examples include the symposium on "Gender and Forestry: Challenges to Sustainable Livelihoods and Forestry Management", held from 1 to 10 August 2004 in Kilimanjaro, the United Republic of Tanzania; the country-led initiative on lessons learned on sustainable forest management in Africa, with a concluding workshop, held from 18 to 22 October 2004 in Stockholm, Sweden; the Expert Meeting on Traditional Forest-related Knowledge and the Implementation of Related International Commitments, held from 6 to 10 December 2004 in San José, Costa Rica; the country-led initiative on the "Future of the International Arrangement on Forests", held from 25 to 28 January 2005 in Mexico; the organization-led initiative on "Practical Solutions to Combat Illegal Logging: Dialogue on Best Practice for Business and Civil Society", held from 8 to 10 March 2005 in Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of China; the International Expert Meeting on Innovative Financial Mechanisms: Searching for Viable Alternatives to Secure the Basis for the Financial Sustainability of Forests, to be held from 29 March to 1 April 2005 in San José, Costa Rica; and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration Global Forest Landscape Restoration Implementation Workshop, to be held from 4 to 8 April 2005 in Petropolis, Brazil.

These examples demonstrate the range of subjects covered by initiatives. They are useful in gathering a large number of country representatives, relevant organizations and major groups; disseminating information; facilitating detailed discussion and analysis; and highlighting the lessons learned on implementation and emerging forest-related issues. Within an informal setting, initiatives have covered an array of discussion topics extending from institutional and legal options on forests, the application of the principles of sustainable forest management, and social and gender aspects, to forest economic perspectives and environmental considerations. These initiatives provide valuable expert input to the work of the Forum, with reports being made available for consideration at the Forum sessions, and have influenced policy developments at the Forum.

D. Advances in forest partnerships and processes

8. A number of regional and international processes have developed around different themes of sustainable forest management, reflecting particular priorities in specific regions. The developments in respect of dialogue on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management, as well as on forest law enforcement, governance and illegal international trade, have shown how it is possible to achieve networking and partnership within regions, and between processes, in order to benefit from experiences in different parts of the world. The Forum has been supportive and actively liaising with these partnerships, including the Asia Forest Partnership, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, a number of forest law enforcement and governance processes, the Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Montreal Process, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the Tehran Process and other regional criteria and indicators-related processes. Some of these partnerships and processes are considered in more detail below.

9. *Asia Forest Partnership*. This Partnership was launched during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 by the Governments of Japan and Indonesia, with the support of other Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. It has three main objectives: control of illegal logging, control of forest fire, and rehabilitation and reforestation of degraded lands. Building on international and regional activities, cooperation has extended to areas such as developing forest policies, plans and programmes; building capacity for effective forest management; good governance and forest law enforcement; use of satellite data and mapping; participatory management; and intersectoral coordination within Governments. At its Fourth Meeting for the Promotion of Asian Forest Partnership, in Tokyo in December 2004, an Announcement on Strengthening the Asia Forest Partnership was adopted. The statement was aimed at giving clarity in its mandate and structure.

10. *Congo Basin Forest Partnership*. The Governments of South Africa and the United States of America, along with Conservation International, the World Wildlife Fund, the Wildlife Conservation Society and many other organizations, established the Congo Basin Forest Partnership to promote economic development, alleviate poverty, improve governance and enhance conservation of natural resources in the region. The Partnership builds on the commitment made at the 1999 Yaoundé Summit and plans to set up a network of national parks and protected areas, as well as transboundary protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions and assistance

to communities that depend on forest and wildlife resources, in 11 key landscapes in seven Central African countries: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The Director of the Forum secretariat participated at the second Summit of Heads of State, held in Brazzaville in February 2005, where France accepted the task of coordinating partnership activities during the next two years. In the presence of the Heads of State of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, France and Gabon, and representatives of the Heads of State of Burundi, Sao Tome and Principe and Rwanda, a further commitment for the conservation and the sustainable management of the forest ecosystems in Central Africa was made.

11. *Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean.* Partners of the Model Forest Network include the Governments of Canada, Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic, the International Model Forest Network secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Network builds programmes for sustainable forest management that reflect the priorities, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that are unique to the region, and lends support to existing model forests.

12. *Processes on forest law enforcement, governance and illegal international trade.* The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation")[2] includes a commitment to "take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products, including in forest biological resources, with the support of the international community, and provide human and institutional capacity-building related to the enforcement of national legislation in those areas" (para. 45 (c)). The issue of illegal logging has become increasingly prominent in the international policy agenda. Several processes, internationally and regionally driven, have been addressing forest law enforcement, governance and associated trade in the forest sector. Since the first session of the Forum, two regional Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) ministerial processes have been initiated, in Eastern Asia and the Pacific, and in Africa. These ministerial-level political processes have mobilized international commitments from producer, consumer and donor Governments to increase efforts to prevent illegal logging, as well as associated illegal trade and corruption in the forest sector. At the fourth session of the Forum, the Russian Federation announced its intention to host a Europe and Northern Asia FLEG ministerial process, and preparations are going forward to hold the process in September 2005. Although no official FLEG process is under way in Latin America and the Caribbean, civil society there has been active in generating awareness of these pressing issues. The World Bank has been facilitating these regional FLEG initiatives, along with other international organizations, donor agencies and Governments.

13. *Tehran Process.* A strategic plan of action for the Tehran Process is currently being developed by the Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCC) secretariat to strengthen capacity of these countries, and to promote the inclusion of forestry and forest-related issues in national development agendas. The new programme designation on land degradation under GEF is expected to provide financial assistance to countries in the region to help in the implementation of relevant Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action. Given the importance of rehabilitation and conservation efforts, the

Forum may wish to offer further support to actions in this field and to participate in key meetings and activities of the Tehran Process.

14. *Criteria and indicators processes.* At present, the nine major international criteria and indicators processes (the African Timber Organization, the Dry Forest Asia Initiative, the Dry-Zone Africa Process, ITTO, the Lepaterique Process, the Montreal Process, the Near East Process, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the Tarapoto Proposal) involve 149 countries and 85 per cent of the world's forests. These criteria and indicators processes have played a major role in the development of a common understanding of what constitutes sustainable forest management. At its fourth session, the Forum, in its resolution 4/3, acknowledged seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management, drawn from the criteria identified by existing criteria and indicators processes, as offering a reference framework for sustainable forest management. Furthermore, the Global Forest Resources Assessment update in 2005, undertaken by FAO, is being structured around six of the seven criteria and indicators thematic elements, thus contributing in a harmonized way to providing data for a global overview of progress towards sustainable forest management. The Forum secretariat has been actively involved with most of the processes. Stakeholders at the international, regional, national and subnational levels have attached importance to criteria and indicators as providing a framework for policy formulation and monitoring of sustainable forest management and national forest programmes. International organizations, including several members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as non-governmental organizations, have provided support to the development of these processes and have assisted countries in testing and implementing criteria and indicators at the national and subnational levels. These processes are also directing efforts towards the development and implementation of criteria and indicators relevant for the forest management unit, involving a range of partners, including forest owners, indigenous communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

15. *Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration.* This Partnership, launched in March 2003, currently comprises more than 20 partners and sponsors, including nine members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, several Governments and governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and a growing number of companies. The members of the Global Partnership support landscape restoration-related activities in many parts of the world, through field projects, national consultations, regional workshops and the establishment of national working groups. Several analytical papers and information materials have also been prepared. The Forum secretariat joined the Partnership at its inception and has been an active member of the steering committee for the aforementioned Global Forest Landscape Restoration Implementation Workshop, to be held in Petropolis, Brazil, in April 2005.

II. Policy and programme coordination with United Nations bodies

A. The Economic and Social Council and the 2005 high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly

16. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, requested that the role and methods of work of each functional commission and relevant subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council be examined during a high-level Assembly meeting in September 2005. Subsequently, the Council, in its resolution 2004/63 of 23 July 2004, requested its subsidiary bodies to contribute, through it, to the high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, which would also review progress in implementing commitments made in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.[3] As suggested in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (E/CN.18/2005/__), the Forum may wish to use the outcome of this review as a basis for responding to the request of the Assembly. This will also provide an opportunity to demonstrate to the international community how forests and the Forum can contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The opportunity to articulate the role of forests in broader development agendas, by directly addressing themes set out in the Council agenda, as is the case this year, may well prove to be a positive one for the Forum and an opportunity worth having in the future.

B. Follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration

17. The United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted by Heads of State and Government in September 2000. It contains a number of global goals and targets related to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education, gender equality, health, environmental sustainability and global partnership for development. All of these commitments build on agreements reached by countries during the 1990s in various conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Forests are highlighted in the Millennium Declaration and the proportion of land area covered by forest constitutes an indicator (No. 25) for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (No. 7) on ensuring environmental sustainability. The Forum secretariat has participated in several Inter-Agency and Expert Meetings on Millennium Development Goal Indicators and has collaborated, with FAO and other organizations, in the Subgroup on Environment. The Forum will address several of these issues further during the high-level ministerial segment of its fifth session, where it will consider the report of the Secretary-General on the linkages between forests and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (E/CN.18/2005/__).

C. Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and the regional commissions

18. Interaction with other functional commissions and United Nations bodies, including, in particular, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the regional commissions, has been increasingly important to the Forum and its secretariat, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. Member States have encouraged the regional commissions to participate in the fifth session of the Forum and to contribute to the review of the regional perspectives on forests, particularly during the Forum's high-level segment.

D. Small island developing States

19. The International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Mauritius in January 2005, reviewed the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States[4] and adopted the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the Mauritius Declaration. In the Programme of Action, forests are linked to other issues, including agriculture, food security and climate change. The Mauritius Strategy makes specific reference to the intergovernmental forest policy process, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, affirming in a separate paragraph the strong commitment of small island developing States to sustainable forest management and the work of the Forum. Efforts to develop human and institutional capacity of small island developing States also called for investment in appropriate training in forestry and natural resources product development, with the involvement of non-governmental organizations and community groups of small island developing States. The Forum secretariat had been actively involved in the preparations of the Mauritius Meeting, having attending the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in October 2003 (see A/C.2/58/14, annex, for the report thereof), and the Interregional Preparatory Meeting, with ministerial participation, held in Nassau, the Bahamas, in January 2004 (see A/58/782, annex, for the report thereon). The Forum secretariat also participated in the Inter-agency Task Force, chaired by the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Division for Sustainable Development.

E. Activities of the Forum secretariat within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

20. *General functions as a division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. The Forum secretariat participates actively in the interdepartmental activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. When requested, it provides inputs to reports of the Secretary-General and other documentation prepared for the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The secretariat is active in the task forces established to ensure broad-based preparations for the different segments of the substantive session of the Council as well as the panel discussions and round tables organized by the Department of Economic and

Social Affairs. The secretariat contributes every year to the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions of the Council, providing information about policy recommendations from the Forum that are relevant to the themes under consideration by the Council. In order for the Forum to contribute to the broader agenda of the United Nations in a more focused and deliberate manner, it may wish to consider including in its agenda for each session a discussion on the role of forests in relation to the theme or themes for the segments of the Council's substantive session for that particular year; it could then forward any relevant policy recommendations to the Council.

21. *Task Force on Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Development.* The Forum secretariat has actively contributed to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Task Force on Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Development. The Task Force was established to develop, in collaboration with other United Nations bodies, a strategic framework for integrating socio-economic issues in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It held an Expert Group Meeting in New York on 15 November 2004 as a first step towards developing the framework for the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in this area. The Forum secretariat participated collaboratively in this meeting, particularly in the discussion concerning natural resources management, and forests in conflict and peacebuilding.

22. *Role in the response of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to the Indian Ocean tsunami.* In response to the tragedy of the Indian Ocean tsunami that occurred on 26 December 2004, the Forum secretariat contributed to the message of support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The secretariat also raised awareness about the fact that unsustainable management of forests causes serious and adverse long-term consequences, pointing out the importance of mangrove forests for many tropical coastlines and highlighting, in particular, their protective function in helping to dissipate the energy of incoming waves. As post-tsunami reconstruction moves forward, attention has been directed by the secretariat to opportunities for well-planned restoration of coastal forests and vegetation. Re-establishment with mangrove and other suitable species can offer significant benefits, but needs to form part of a realistic national forest plan that is developed within an integrated framework for management of coastal areas.

III. Regional bodies

23. During its third and fourth sessions, the Forum held regionally focused events to showcase experiences in the implementation of sustainable forest management. At the third session, representatives from the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and the UNEP Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy provided a joint presentation of their cooperative activities on forests in Europe. In addition, the session was informed of actions taken under the auspices of the Central American System for Integration, and its forest component, as well as activities in the Amazon Basin. At the fourth session, challenges and opportunities for sustainable forest management in small island developing States and African countries were addressed. It is expected that the focus of the regional panel at the fifth session will be sustainable forest management in Asia.

24. The Forum secretariat has encouraged closer ties with regional organizations and bodies, and in many of its activities has drawn upon their knowledge and networks to enhance further collaboration on sustainable forest management. For example, the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions have helped extend the global forest policy dialogue to the national level, by bringing together heads of the national forestry agencies, in the respective regions, to discuss policy and technical issues of interest. In most regions, the Regional Forestry Commission meets every two years, reporting on issues of regional significance to the global forest community, through the FAO Conference and through the FAO Committee on Forestry. In 2004, four Regional Forestry Commissions organized specific workshops and in-session seminars on the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and highlighted national forest programmes as vehicles for implementation. The Forum secretariat has also been engaging with the regional commissions, in particular ECE, which is currently the only commission dealing specifically with forest and timber issues. The secretariat has addressed other regional commissions in respect of forest-related matters within the context of the Millennium Development Goals and other activities, including natural resource use, governance, renewable energy and sustainable development.

25. Workshops at the regional level have provided an effective means to discuss and understand challenges, search for approaches to address common problems, build trust, and develop a basis for cooperative work between countries and civil society. For example, in 2004, the European Forest Institute hosted two workshops on forestry incentives in Europe and on research in the context of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. The Forum secretariat participated in both workshops, providing relevant information on economic aspects of forests and research needs for forest policy development at the global level. Action at the regional level will continue to be important in assisting countries in achieving sustainable forest management. Accordingly, steps have been taken by the secretariat to facilitate better communication with regional partners by working on a regional focal point system so as to ensure broader participation and input. Expanding the scope of representation is also necessary to ensure that geographical balance exists within the Forum. Hence, the secretariat has been seeking to make the process of accreditation more available and useful so as to ensure active involvement in Forum sessions of regional organizations, instruments, partnerships and processes.

IV. International instruments and organizations relevant to the forest sector

A. Coordination with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions

26. Noting the distinct mandates and independent status of each organization working on forest issues, the Forum secretariat plans to organize an inter-agency discussion on cooperation and future actions in respect of forest in April 2005, and has invited the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious

Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and FAO, as Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to participate. The meeting will discuss, among other issues, how better to coordinate activities building on the comparative advantages of the organizations in order to achieve harmonization in the implementation of decisions of their governing bodies. It has been proposed that the meeting also address strategic components on cooperation and coordination and explore areas for joint activities in the future work of the international arrangement on forests.

27. In April 2004, a workshop on "Forests and Forest Ecosystems: Promoting Synergy in the Implementation of the three Rio Conventions" was organized in Viterbo, Italy, by the three above-mentioned secretariats. The merit of the Workshop related directly to the interactions among the focal points of the three Conventions and other participants. The increasing importance of facilitating country-level interactions between focal points of the Conventions and representatives of forest-related institutions, through use of existing policy and planning mechanisms at the national level, such as national focal point agencies, was underlined.

28. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity (decision VI/22 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, annex) is based on national priorities and needs. There is emphasis particularly on the need for the Convention secretariat and parties to the Convention to cooperate with the Forum, with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and with their partners to ensure national-level implementation of common objectives contained in national forest programmes and national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Regional-level cooperation is also encouraged, for example, when incorporating relevant criteria and indicators into the forest work programme and in order to enhance cross-sectoral integration and intersectoral collaboration. The Convention has noted the importance of supporting the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, in particular those concerning the valuation of forest goods and services, and has stressed the need to harmonize the Convention's work with the proposals for action on traditional forest-related knowledge. The Convention has invited the Forum and the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to provide further views on the preliminary assessment undertaken by its Executive Secretary on the relationship between the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and the activities of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity, with the objective of capturing synergies, facilitating the implementation of related activities under these two instruments, and avoiding duplication of effort.

29. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. At the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to combat Desertification, held in Havana from 25 August to 5 September 2003, it was recommended that countries that were parties to the Convention should adopt and prioritize forest resource assessment techniques for effective analysis of the status of land cover. Parties were called upon to integrate measures to prevent and combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought by means of relevant policies and programmes, such as forest management, as well as poverty eradication and sustainable development strategies. In its decision 12/COP.6, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification requested the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Forum,

the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity to collaborate in order to promote activities with low forest cover countries. A joint approach on forests will be developed, in cooperation with the Tehran Process, among others, in order to strengthen the capacity of low forest cover countries to combat desertification, land degradation and deforestation. GEF, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, Committee on Science and Technology and Global Mechanism, were also invited to give due consideration to the special needs and requirements of low forest cover countries. As the International Year of Deserts and Desertification will be celebrated in 2006, the Forum may wish to liaise more closely with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process and plan to contribute to the related discussions at future meetings.

30. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. The Forum secretariat attended the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in December 2004. The Conference of the Parties at its tenth session adopted a decision on simplified modalities and procedures for small-scale afforestation and reforestation project activities under the clean development mechanism, and measures to facilitate their implementation. This decision finalized the rules of the clean development mechanism. A second decision related to the use of good practice guidance for land use, land-use change and forestry under article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[5] and completed the guidelines for reporting greenhouse gas inventories. In connection with the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties, meetings of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice were held to address forest-related topics, including harvested wood products. The Convention secretariat also incorporated the land use, land-use change and forestry common reporting format tables and related technical modifications into the Guidelines for the Preparation of National Communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC Reporting Guidelines on Annual Inventories. These developments will influence forest-related reporting under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and need to be considered in light of the work on harmonizing forest-related definitions, as well as the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting.

B. Cooperation with relevant international organizations related to forests

31. *FAO*. Collaboration with FAO, and its support to national forest programmes, provision of global information on forests, and undertakings through its Regional Forestry Commissions, have contributed to the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action as well as to monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management. Through its role in the National Forest Programme Facility, FAO, together with other international partners, has also helped countries better understand and implement internationally agreed actions on forests. The seventeenth session of the Committee on Forestry held in Rome in March 2005, was

preceded by a high-level ministerial meeting that addressed international cooperation on forest fire and commitment to sustainable forest management. Ministers were invited to consider initiating action to develop a global accord for international cooperation on forest fires and approaches to improving national intersectoral cooperation and coordination. The Bureau of the fifth session of the Forum and the secretariat participated in the session, as it offered an opportunity for the Forum at its fifth session to build upon the outcomes of the ministerial meeting.

32. *International Tropical Timber Agreement*. The International Tropical Timber Council, the governing body of ITTO, held its thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions in 2004, both attended by the Forum secretariat. As the current Agreement is scheduled to expire on 31 December 2006, the negotiation process for a successor agreement is currently under way. Two conference sessions under the aegis of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have been held in the period between the fourth and fifth sessions of the Forum. The structure and content of the new Agreement will be of great significance to the further enhancement of cooperation and coordination for efforts towards sustainable forest management.

33. *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*. The Director of the Forum secretariat participated in the UNESCO meeting entitled "Biodiversity: Science and Governance", held in Paris in January 2005, and chaired a workshop on sustainable management of tropical and subtropical forest biodiversity. In addition, the Forum secretariat participated in the meeting of experts of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre held in Nancy, France, in March 2005. The meeting focused on the UNESCO World Heritage Centre forest programme and on actions for the next several years. The secretariat is in the process of establishing closer links with UNESCO and expects that the two bodies will be able to influence positively each other's programmes related to forestry in the future.

34. *World Conservation Union (IUCN)*. The third IUCN World Conservation Congress, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2004, addressed pressing sustainable development challenges around the world and centred around four themes: biodiversity loss and species extinction; ecosystem management; health, poverty and conservation; and markets, business and the environment. A number of forest-related events and workshops were held in conjunction with the Congress by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The Forum secretariat participated in the Congress and the other forest-related events. The Congress adopted resolution WCC3.071 on international cooperation on forest management (Congress reference: CGR3.RES055E-Rev.1), in which the Congress requested inter alia, the Director-General of IUCN to ensure the continued participation of IUCN in, and its active role at, the meetings of the Forum and to further the future work and synergies of the Partnership.

35. *International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO)*. The Forum secretariat has been actively involved with IUFRO in exploring how the provision of scientific knowledge and advice can be further enhanced in the future at the international level in order to facilitate informed decision-making and contribute to policy implementation. The Global Forest Information Service (GFIS), a recent initiative, serves as an Internet gateway that provides access to forest data from around the world, and includes browsing and metadata search facilities for users. The provision of information to GFIS builds on agreements with a broad range of

forest-related institutions giving them wider opportunities to disseminate information. In leading this initiative, IUFRO maintains close collaboration with FAO, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Forum secretariat and other partners. The secretariat also acts as a member of the GFIS Steering Committee. The fully operational service will be presented on the occasion of the Twenty-second IUFRO World Congress to be held in Brisbane, Australia, in August 2005.

36. *World Congress of Agroforestry*. The Forum secretariat participated in the first World Congress of Agroforestry held in Orlando, Florida, from 27 June to 2 July 2004. It was attended by about 700 experts from 82 countries. The theme of the Congress was "Working together for sustainable land-use systems". On 2 July, the Congress adopted the Orlando Declaration, highlighting the contribution of agroforestry systems and technologies in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Congress also called upon the international community, including the Forum, to endorse the role of, and the potential afforded by, agroforestry in accomplishing the targeted objectives and goals set in international commitments and agreements.

37. *Global Wildland Fire Advisory Group*. The Wildland Fire Advisory Group of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction has been working towards enhancing international cooperation and collaboration on preventing and combating forest fires. The members of the Advisory Group represent a number of government forest and forest fire services, United Nations organizations, research institutions, academia and non-governmental organizations. It has a number of regional wildland fire networks covering all regions of the world, and its close link to forests and sustainable forest management warrants closer collaboration with the Forum. The Forum secretariat attended the first meeting of the Advisory Group, held in Freiburg, Germany, on 3 and 4 December 2004.

V. Conclusions

38. **Forests affect, and are directly and indirectly affected by, a considerable number of binding and non-binding instruments, each having a particular focus and mandate that determines its scope in respect of forests. The fact that so many instruments and processes are relevant to forests is due to the cross-sectoral nature of forests. At the global level, it has been recognized that aspects of forest issues are being addressed in multiple areas by various international and regional organizations.**

39. **The Forum and its secretariat have undertaken serious efforts to improve cooperation and coordination at an organizational level. Nevertheless, greater attention needs to be directed to the issue of coordination of international bodies at the global, regional and subregional levels for better management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Efforts should also focus on policy cooperation and coordination at the intergovernmental level so as to avoid inefficiencies and, particularly, the transmittal of conflicting messages to different bodies. Consideration should also be given to how decisions taken in other sectors and bodies impact forests. Correspondingly, Forum decisions need to be well positioned in the agendas of other bodies, to ensure clear messages at the international level. There is scope to improve**

synergistic approaches and to mobilize available resources, conducive to national-level implementation, demonstrating the benefits and full value of forestry to stakeholders in and outside the forest sector.

40. The Forum is uniquely positioned to further advance the framework of sustainable forest management and to act as a key political voice on forests. It is essential to continue enhancing synergies among partners, particularly among the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and to improve cooperation and policy and programme coordination in and outside the forest sector. The Forum in directing increased political attention to the role of forests, also contributes to the goals as set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

41. The forest sector has been recognized as a potential platform for creating synergies between and with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions, as well as other multilateral environmental agreements. Effective coordination and cooperation among the Conventions, and relevant forest organizations, bodies and processes, are important, in part because they lead to the better utilization of resources and expertise, a lesser likelihood of overlaps or duplication of work, and better communication and dissemination of information, as well as broader political attention. Collaboration between the secretariats should include the regular exchange of information, for example, through the seeking of comments on the preparation of documents where the subject matter is relevant to other secretariats, participation in joint side events and similar activities, and cooperation through country- and organizational-led initiatives. Members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have also found the Partnership to be a functional means of efficient cooperation. Much of its effectiveness is attributed to its voluntary and informal nature, its manageable size, and, above all, the strong commitment of its members to collaboration.

42. Collaboration between national focal points of the Forum and those of the three United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions is also important in order to foster national-level collaboration, particularly through the use of existing policy and planning mechanisms, such as national forest programmes. Cooperation at the national level has often been underscored as particularly relevant for fostering synergy, because it is at that level that perceptible implementation occurs. At the national level, collaboration and cooperation can make a considerable difference with respect to achieving widespread engagement in the implementation of sustainable forest management. Furthermore, it has been noted that effective coordination at the international level depends upon a coherent approach at the national level that provides consistent messages to international bodies.

43. Within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, there is also scope for dealing with forest issues more coherently and for it to contribute more effectively to discussions on economic and social development in general, as well as on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development with other Departments of the United Nations Secretariat. As the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is currently developing a strategic plan to address these issues, the Forum and its secretariat (as one of the divisions of the Department

of Economic and Social Affairs) should consider taking the opportunity to exercise a key role in the area of natural resource management.

VI. Points for discussion

44. The Forum may wish to undertake to:

(a) Encourage regional and thematic activities, as part of and prior to Forum sessions, as well as country- and organization-led initiatives, closely involving major groups, by supporting the convening of regionally focused events during Forum sessions, by promoting continuous exchange of experiences, and by refocusing interactive dialogues among experts and practitioners;

(b) Invite the regional commissions, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as well as other existing regional bodies and processes, such as the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions, to consider organizing regional meetings and activities, as necessary and appropriate, in order to contribute to the work of the Forum;

(c) Consider ways to improve the coordination of actions within the United Nations system, and among relevant international and regional bodies, in order to support the implementation of sustainable forest management;

(d) Encourage cross-sectoral coordination, nationally and internationally, between the forest sector and other sectors, so as to identify and reduce impacts on forests from decisions taken outside the forest sector;

(e) Encourage the heads of international organizations to continue supporting the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to help facilitate the implementation of Forum decisions and to make greater use of the Partnership in carrying out joint and collaborative programmes, within their existing mandates;

(f) Promote complementarity among national forest programmes and action plans under the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions to further mainstream sustainable forest management in cross-sectoral policies;

(g) Request the Forum secretariat to continue actively participating in and supporting the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as well as enhancing cooperation with relevant international and regional partnerships, processes and bodies.

Notes

[1] The three United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (ibid., vol. 1760, No. 30619), both of which were opened for signature at the Conference, held in Rio de Janeiro, from 3 to 14 June 1992, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (ibid., vol. 1954, No. 33480). The last-mentioned was the outcome of a recommendation made by the Conference

in paragraph 12.40 of Agenda 21 (see *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II), by which the General Assembly was invited to establish at its forty-seventh session, under its aegis, an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of such a convention, with a view to finalizing it by June 1994.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[4] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.